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ON THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA.  
*Abridged from Coxe's Female Scripture Biography.*

THE historical part of the New Testament, called The Acts of the Apostles, contains a faithful record of the early propagation of the Gospel, and the incessant exertions of the first labourers in the vineyard. They were not men who "wasted their strength in strenuous idleness," or dissipated the time of action in "laboriously doing nothing;" but were endowed with extraordinary qualifications, and an inextinguishable zeal for their interesting employment. They reflected the light of the sun of righteousness upon a dark age, and glowed with the very spirit of their ascended Lord. Remarkable effects were produced upon the moral world, notwithstanding the counteracting influence of human prejudice and opposition; and as they quitted the world amid the whirlwinds of persecution, and in the flames of martyrdom, they dropped from their ascending chariots their mantles upon their successors in office, "who entered into their labours" and continued with great power to give "witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all."

Paul, and the companions of his missionary tour, first met with Lydia, at one of the Jewish places of prayer by the river side, which ran near the city of Philippi. Lydia was one who "worshipped God," that is, had learned the character of Jehovah, and was probably a Jewish proselyte; and while from the natural aversion of mankind to the humiliating doctrine of salvation through a crucified person, the greater proportion of Jews rejected him, she experienced a true conversion, not only from the principles of heathenism, but from those of Judaism, to those of Jesus Christ.

That moral change, that spiritual renovation, which is called *conversion*, is, and ever will be, the subject of profane ridicule amongst unbelievers. "The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned." The scriptures themselves predict this incapacity, (even in some of the most refined and intellectual of our species) to form a conception of this marvellous change; and experience evinces the truth of what they affirm. It is characteristic of human perversity to disbelieve, what is imperceptible to reason, or invisible to sense, and to vaunt itself upon that very infidelity, as a distinctive mark of pre-eminence, which is, in fact, a proof of debasement and guilt.

Lydia presents an interesting specimen, not only of the reality, but of the nature of the great work of conversion. 1st. Our attention is to be directed to *the seat of this spiritual renovation*. It is said of Lydia, that her *heart* was opened.—This change does not consist in assuming a new name, professing new opinions, using a new language, performing a few rites and ceremonies, or reforming a few exterior vices. These are only branches—the tree itself must be made good—the crab stock of nature must be grafted with spiritual principles, and by being planted in the garden of the Lord, be brought under a Heavenly culture. It is then only “the fruits of righteousness” may be anticipated, “which are to the glory and praise of God.”

The disordered state of the passions is a striking evidence of human degeneracy. Each passion is fixed on a wrong object, pursues an unworthy end, and is susceptible of false impressions. The will is perverted, and chooses, with obstinate resolution, whatever is erroneous and criminal; on which account men are represented as “loving darkness rather than light.” In fact, such has been the melancholy effect of sin upon the perceptions of the human soul, that good seems evil, and evil good; and until this disorder become rectified by a divine touch, the heart will remain at enmity against God, and the refuge and resort of the worst dispositions. Such is the statement of Jesus Christ himself—Mark vii. 21.

As the intellectual and moral state of man are, in a religious view, closely connected, the renovation of the heart is essentially connected with an important change in the understanding. The latter may indeed be considerably improved and in-

formed, when no spiritual effect is produced upon the former; but the former cannot be renewed without corresponding effects upon the latter; and the illumination of the understanding is so universal, that believers are said to be “light in the world.” Nor is it merely new light diffused over objects familiar to the thoughts, but a discovery of new scenes. The soul, in a sense, changes its hemisphere, emerges from darkness, ascends to the summits of Pisgah, and contemplates the ineffable glories of a new creation. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

The total renovation of the heart is evinced by susceptibility of conscience. This moral faculty, in an unconverted state, is either perverted or hardened. In the former case, our obligations are not clearly discerned, or are easily dispensed with; in the latter, the most powerful appeals to love or fear are resisted.—In the progress of sin, to its most awful consummation, those gentle whispers which were at first noticed, and made the transgressor tremble, till he sometimes let fall the forbidden fruit, are at length unheard.—Every intimation is silenced by guilty merriment, which perhaps was at first forced, but soon becomes habitual. Where conscience is not lulled into total inaction, it is, in this state of character, violated with little remorse. But in the sincere and humble christian, conscience is tender, easily offended with evil, and gradually approximating that state of tender susceptibility, in respect to sin, in which it resembles a well polished mirror, that shews the slightest particle of dust or damp upon its surface. Such a conscience is no less *rigorous* than it is tender, and repels temptation with persevering



energy. It will hold no debate with the tempter; and so far from seeking to ascertain how far it may advance towards sinful compliances, without contracting actual guilt, it will "abstain from all appearance of evil."

The heart is the seat of those principles, and the source of that transformation of character, which is comprehended in the term *conversion*. This change is not an opinion, or an emotion, resembling the morning cloud, and the morning dew, that pass away, but an abiding, and deep wrought alteration.

That such improvements of character often have occurred, and are often taking place now, cannot be denied by any philosophic observer of human nature. To disregard them, or to neglect an examination of their use, is to neglect one of the most interesting classes of facts observable amongst mankind. Who has not either heard of, or witnessed, the most extraordinary changes of conduct, produced through the apparent influence (to say the least,) of religious motives? I say nothing here of the three thousand converted in one day at the feast of Pentecost; or of the conversion of St. Paul and others, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, because these are usually ascribed to the miraculous and extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, in the apostolic times. You have witnessed instances of men running eagerly the career of folly, who have been suddenly arrested and changed from "lovers of pleasure" to "lovers of God." You have known others who devoted themselves early to the military profession, who literally knew no fear, and for a time thought nothing of eternal life, at length transformed from good soldiers, to good soldiers of Jesus Christ, buckling on the "armour of God," to fight "the good fight of

faith," and who following "the captain of their salvation" have obtained the victory, and been rewarded with unfading laurels. Others again, who have been strong and high minded, professing never to be subdued but by the force of argument, and dexterously evading an argument when it was forcible, if it was calculated to expose the sophistry of *free thinking*, or to exhibit the reasonableness and advantages of being pious; who have increased in the dexterity of unbelief, being at length pierced by "a dart from the archer," became convinced that religion is "the one thing needful," and though they came "to scoff, remaining to pray."

The second observable circumstance, in the inspired account of Lydia's conversion, is *its accomplishment by divine agency*. It is stated, that the Lord opened her heart. The effect is not ascribed to the Apostle, or to his coadjutors in the christian ministry. They might speak with the tongue of angels, and burn with the zeal of seraphs; to them might be given in trust "the everlasting gospel;" they might possess the power, not only of placing facts in the clearest light, or urging arguments in the most forcible manner, but even of working miracles, still they could not "open the heart." At this precise point human instrumentality ceases, and divine agency commences.

It is by no means an unfrequent effect of ministerial fidelity, to confirm the native aversion of the impenitent to the doctrines of Christ. Pride resists conviction, and fosters prejudice; and however unanswerable the statements, or fervent the appeals, which may be addressed to them, the mind still remains unsubdued, the heart is still unopened.— It requires the interposal of a migh-

tier power, than either reason, remonstrance or miracles, to accomplish this wonderful transformation of character. Hosts of Apostles, and legions of Angels, would be incompetent, by their own *unaided* exertions, to do "any thing as of themselves," to give light to *one* blind eye, or to rectify *one* prejudiced heart. Human agency then, cannot be of itself effectual. It is the Lord who opens the ear, the eye, the conscience, the understanding, and the heart. What would the weapon accomplish, if the hand of Almighty power were not to grasp and wield it?

The scriptures uniformly ascribe the first principle, all the successive actions, and the final consummation of religion in the heart, to the spirit of God. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, *unto good works*, which God hath ordained, that we should walk in them.

[To be continued ]

*Religious Controversy.*—We are not of the number of those, who reprobate all, even religious controversy; nor yet, like most of those who do reprobate it, are we always *keen* for it. In differing however with persons who choose to differ with us, we do not take it for granted, that we are lawfully descended from the little girl, of whom mention is made by Dr. Franklin, and who wondered how it happened, that *nobody save herself was always in the right*. We do not moreover aspire to the character given by Roger L'Estrange, of that singular being Richard Baxter, who, as we are told, wished to be "his own king, and his own pope, to prescribe his own laws, and grant his own pardons." In speaking therefore, even of an offending brother, we should desire not to forget, that we also are

oftentimes offenders; and if others, in any instance, be clearly in the wrong, *we* cannot always be clearly in the right.

While we continue to believe in the bible, we must continue to believe that it is not left to the option of the christian, whether or not he is to "contend for the faith." There is scarcely a page of the New Testament which does not contain matter *controverted*—all its truths are most sturdily denied, and to give up the defence of the truth, is in effect to give up the truth itself. Among those who profess to be christians, therefore, it ought to be no question, whether the truth is to be defended, when it can only be defended *by controversy*. *But is the truth to be defended in a temper and with feelings which the God of truth so pointedly and repeatedly condemns?* No apology is to be found for it in the imagined tendency of religious controversy, to produce bitterness of feeling and language, because the same God who commands us to contend, not only forbids the indulgence of any unchristian feelings, but also will enable us to subdue, or keep in subjection, all such feelings. In conversation, the christian may be overcome, and may give utterance to feelings, *of which he cannot too soon repent*. But the man who sits down to write, and for the public too, is bound to revise what he has written before he publishes it, and to be careful to expunge whatever must have proceeded from feelings which he is forbidden to indulge.—"A good man," says an old divine, "should be loth to be taken out of the world, reeking hot from a sharp contention with a perverse adversary;" and a christian, especially when defending the truths of religion, ought not to forget that his Lord may come, even before he has finished his work.



We are inclined to think, moreover, that all this bitterness of language is not justly ascribable to bitterness of feeling *in the same degree*. By some it seems to be thought, that men are suspected not to be in earnest unless they be all wrath and fiery indignation, and that zeal is worse than no zeal, if it do not *scorch and consume* all against whom it is directed.

Even prudence would dictate to every man, engaged in the defence of momentous truths, to guard with extreme caution against every expression or feeling of anger. No man has much to dread from the talents or learning of that antagonist, whose feelings he has entirely at his mercy. And he who wishes to bring over to his own way of thinking another, must reason with, and not rail at him, must speak to him in tenderness and love, not in wrath or malice. The christian divine, more especially, whatever he may be engaged about, ought ever to bear it in mind that he professes to be a follower of the *meek and lowly Jesus*—of him, who requires it of all who follow him, to “love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.”

We will here quote a few sentences from Bishop Porteus. “In all cases where religious errors are to be confuted, *temperate discussion*, in the true spirit of christian charity, is the mode we ought invariably to pursue; without giving way to any personal invective, any asperity, either of language or of conduct, towards those who have the misfortune to differ from us in opinion. These things are totally unbecoming a minister of the gospel, who is expressly enjoined by his religion to put away all bitterness, an-

ger, malice, and evil speaking; even when he is reviled, not to revile again; but to be gentle unto all men, in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves.”

Against the wrath, which religious controversy so often produces, we are as ready as any person to enter a solemn protest. But we are equally ready to disavow the notions of those, who because religious controversy may be productive of bitterness and rancour, would no longer contend for the truth, *or any part of it*. The doctrines and institutions of christianity must be defended, so long as they are assailed, or we shall cease to be christians. Professing christians, if they be christians indeed, will defend them in charity and in brotherly love. Perhaps in no way is the *pretender* to christianity, however much he may vaunt of his zeal for the faith, so readily to be detected, as when he is engaged in religious controversy. If indeed a saint by profession, be a hypocrite in reality, it is better that he should be allowed the opportunity which religious controversy affords him, of exposing his real character and disposition. For we will never allow those to be real christians, however orthodox in doctrine, who discover in their pretended zeal for truth a *devilish* temper; and the sooner they discover themselves, and what they really are, the better for those who believe them to be men of real piety. The devil can transform himself into an angel of light, and it is a mercy vouchsafed to those whom he would thereby delude, to be able to discover his *cloven foot*. He is a poor christian indeed, who cannot defend christianity with a christian temper. An author, whose writings are the admiration of every man of taste and piety, tells us, that “there is nothing in which men more de-

ceive themselves than in what the world calls *zeal*." "There are so many passions which hide themselves under it, and so many mischiefs arising from it," that he advises "every zealous man to examine his heart thoroughly, and he will often find that what he calls a zeal for his religion, is either *pride, interest, or ill-nature*."

"Zeal," says the same writer, "is a great ease to a malicious man, by making him believe he does God service, while he is gratifying the bent of a perverse revengeful temper—and that this temper of mind deludes a man very often into an opinion of his zeal, may appear from the common behaviour of the atheist, who maintains and spreads his opinion with as much heat, as those who believe they do it only out of a passion for God's glory."

Surely christianity, and its truths, ought always to be advocated with a christian temper. And whatever "godliness there may be in outward shew," he who indulges towards his antagonist rancour, and malice, and takes a malignant pleasure in misrepresenting his doctrines or conduct, has laid aside every thing rightfully belonging to a christian, except the name. Yet the meek, and humble christian, who is sometimes condemned to the task of perusing pieces, professedly written in defence of christian truth, and in refutation of heresy, finds reason to thank his God, that he lives in a country which does not allow men to burn each other at the stake, *for the sake of the truth*. It is an old remark, that the lives and tempers of professing christians, have done more injury to real christianity, than all the writings of its enemies. A reform then seems to be necessary; not that christians must reform christianity, but by the more frequent use of

all the means which are of God's appointment, should seek to be reformed by it. The fault is not in our most holy religion, but it is owing to this that many of those who profess that religion, undervalue the remedies which it has provided for cleansing and purifying the heart, and for the cure of all our spiritual disorders. He cannot have used, as he ought, the divinely instituted means of grace, whose temper is morose, whose passions are ungovernable, who in his conversation or writings, would "bear false witness against his neighbour."

It is not to religious controversy, that the soldier of Christ is to object. He is bound to maintain and defend the truth, but it is at the same time his duty to defend it with meekness and candour, and give no countenance to those whose zeal is all bitterness and rancour, who delight in misrepresentation and abuse, and who in asserting their own right to think and judge for themselves, in religion, would traduce and injure those who "do not agree with them in the same scheme of belief," and yet have the same right to think and decide for themselves.

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Bishop Horne—Of Sanctifying Grace.

In order to form a clear idea of sanctification, it must be considered that man, as a fallen creature, stands in need of two things, *a deliverance from the guilt of sins past, and an emancipation from the power of sin present and future*. The former of these is styled *justification*, the latter *sanctification*. The one is performed without man, by the blood of Christ, effectually offered and pleaded for him, in the presence of God, upon his repentance and faith; the other is wrought within him, by the spirit sent into his soul in consequence



as well as evidence of his justification. Christ first made the atonement for sin, by shedding his blood, then ascended to plead it, and then sent the spirit. The atonement he made once, but he liveth continually to make intercession for us by pleading it on our behalf, and as continually to send the spirit to renew the soul of every sinner, who by repentance and faith through the ministration of the church, lays hold on the benefits of that prevailing intercession, and is "accepted in the beloved." Justification, whensoever granted, must be perfect, because forgiveness cannot be partial; sanctification may be imperfect, and always is so until death, because till then "in many things we offend all" and still stand in need of fresh justification and forgiveness; else why pray we for it till our last breath, in the words which Christ himself has taught us, "Forgive us our trespasses." "The best posture in which death can find the most perfect christian is upon his knees, confessing his sins and entreating forgiveness."

The first portion of sanctifying grace is given at baptism, which is the seal of justification and the beginning of sanctification, inasmuch as the sinner being then sacramentally buried with Christ into his death, arises with him into the power of his resurrection, justified from the guilt of sin, through repentance and faith in his blood, and renewed unto holiness by the operation of his spirit. This renewal at first conferred by the baptismal laver is styled *regeneration*, (a) and answers in things natural to the birth of an infant. But then as an infant, though born complete in all its parts, yet comes to its full stature and strength by slow and imperceptible degrees, so it is with the regenerate spirit of

a christian—while it is (as St. Peter calls it,) a babe in Christ, it must be fed with the milk of the word; when it is more grown in grace, with the strong meat of its salutary doctrines; when it is infirm it must be strengthened with the comforts of its promises; and when sick or wounded by sin it must be recovered and restored by godly counsel and wholesome discipline, by penance and absolution, by the medicines of the word and sacraments, as duly and properly administered in the church; by the lawfully and regularly appointed delegates and representatives of the physician of souls. This gradual and complex work of our sanctification is carried on through our whole lives by the Spirit of God, given in due degree and proportion to every individual for that purpose. And it is marvellous to behold, as the excellent Bishop Andrews observes, how from the laver of regeneration, to the administration of the *viaticum*, this good spirit helpeth us and poureth his benefits upon us, *having a grace for every season*.—When we are troubled with erroneous opinions he is the spirit of truth; when assaulted with temptations he is the spirit of holiness; when dissipated with worldly vanity he is the spirit of compunction; when broken with worldly sorrow he is the Holy Ghost the comforter. It is he who after having regenerated us in our baptism, *confirms* us by the imposition of hands; renews us to repentance when we fall away; teaches us all our life long what we know not, puts us in mind of what we forget, stirs us up when we are dull, helps us in our prayers, relieves us in our infirmities, consoles us in our heaviness, gives song of joy in the darkest night of sorrow, seals us to the day of our redemption, and raises us up again in the last day, *when that*

*which was sown in grace shall be reaped in glory, and the work of sanctification in spirit, soul and body, shall be completed.*

What therefore remains, but that we shew forth the thankfulness of our hearts by the holiness of our lives, and live as becometh those whom Christ having redeemed by his most precious blood hath sanctified with his most Holy Spirit? Seeing Christ our Saviour has bestowed such a gift upon his church, *let us never provoke him to take it from us.* As it is a gift let us always be forward to acknowledge as much; *not attributing to nature what is due to grace, and robbing the Holy Ghost to adorn reason.* As though a gift it is given to every man, to profit withal, let us have that day continually in our thoughts, *when an account of our profiting will be required,* and let us never forget that the same fire burns for the unprofitable and unbeliever, for him who neglects this gracious gift, and for him who rejects it, since by the ascension of Christ, the heavens have been opened, and the Holy Dove has been sent down upon the earth, let us not give sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eye-lids, till we have prepared in our hearts, an habitation for him. *Let pride depart that it drive not away the spirit of humility; let anger be put from us that we quench not the spirit of meekness, and let not that which is unchaste be named, or thought of, that we grieve not the spirit of purity.*

(a) Baptism is a new birth by which we enter into the new world, the blessings and spiritualities of the kingdom. And it is by St. Paul called the 'Laver of Regeneration;' And from this time forward we have a new principle put into us, the spirit of grace.

*Bishop Taylor*

That we may be thus born of the spirit, we must be born also of water, which our Saviour here puts in the first place; not as if there was any such virtue in water whereby

it could regenerate us, but because this is the rite or ordinance appointed by Christ, wherein he regenerates us by his Holy Spirit. And seeing this is instituted by Christ himself, as we cannot be born of water without the spirit, so neither can we in the ordinary way, be born of the spirit without water used and applied in obedience and in conformity to this institution. Christ hath joined them together, and it is not in our power to part them; he that would be born of the spirit must be born of water also.

What Christ means by being born of the water and of the Spirit, is now (that was the 17th century,) made a question. *I say now, for it was never made so till of late years.* For many years together, none ever doubted, but the whole christian world took it for granted that our Saviour by these words, meant only, that except a man be baptized, according to his institution, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; this being the most plain and obvious sense of the words; forasmuch as there is no other way of being born again of water, as well as of the spirit, but only in the sacrament of baptism.

*Bishop Beveridge.*

If it can be shewn that the gospel any where promises a new birth, independent of baptism, we will believe it; but as the church could never find it we never shall, and they that teach it, and say there is experience for it, have no warrant from scripture.

*Jones of Nayland.*

Other things are denoted by *renovation* than were by *regeneration*. Such as getting quit of the rust and corruption of our old nature, putting off the old man with his deeds, and assuming new dispositions and abilities — *Gloucester Ridley.*

I would therefore wish generally to restrict the term, (regeneration,) to the baptismal privileges, and considering them as comprehending not only an external admission into the visible church; not only a covenanted title to the pardon and grace of the gospel, but even a degree of spiritual aid, *vouchsafed and ready to offer itself to our acceptance or rejection* at the dawn of reason. I would recommend a reference to those privileges in our discourses as talents which the hearer should have so improved as to bear interest, as *seed which should have sprung up and produced fruit.*

*Bishop of Gloucester.*

These quotations are made in order to prove that the term *regeneration* is used in our baptismal service, in its scriptural and primitive sense, and that those who call baptism *regeneration*, do not, as it is sometimes said, deny the necessity of a change of heart, which must be wrought by the Spirit of God. That many thus regenerated, when they grow up, ex-



hibit none of the *fruits of righteousness*, is undeniable. But what does this prove? Not surely that God never imparted to them grace, which might have been improved, but that they have received the *grace of God in vain*; have grieved the Spirit of God, and that their baptism, instead of insuring to them salvation, will but serve to increase their condemnation. Much of religious controversy might be avoided, if controversialists were *more* anxious to understand the meaning of each other, and were *less* anxious to put each other in the wrong. Regeneration is synonymous to baptism, but neither of them will ensure final salvation.

### Hints on Public Worship.

[Continued from page 155.]

AFTER the first lesson in the morning service, follows the hymn, called from its first words in Latin, *The Te Deum*. This is one of the finest human compositions that was ever produced. It is very ancient, being mentioned by St. Ambrose as in use in his time towards the end of the fourth century. In this hymn the attention of the people is again relieved by a change of posture, and a part assigned to the congregation. They are now to *stand*, standing being the proper posture for praise, and they are to join with heart and voice, reading the verses alternately with the minister, or joining with him in chanting them. It consists of praise, confession of faith, and supplication. Therein we contemplate angels and archangels, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and the universal church in earth and heaven, as our associates and fellow worshippers. We glorify separately the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the one glorious object of our worship, dwelling particularly on the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, the eternity of his Divine nature, the humility of his birth, the merit of his death, the height of his exaltation, and the certainty of his return to judgment. Therein we implore grace and eternal salvation for

all God's redeemed people, and particularly for ourselves. May we always enter fully into the spirit of this enlivening part of our worship!

After the *Te Deum* follows the Second Lesson taken out of the New Testament: in the morning service from the Gospels, or the Acts of the Apostles, and in the evening from the Epistles, that is, the letters of the Apostles to the first churches of Christ. Here again we have to *sit* in silence, while the minister reads to us the word of God. Here again we are to pray in silence for the enlightening and sanctifying grace of God's Holy Spirit, that we may know the truth, and be made to feel its blessed influence on our hearts. For this purpose we may secretly breathe the prayer of David, "Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wonderful things of thy law,"—"the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus;" Or, in the words of the apostle, "May the word of Christ dwell in me richly," "that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith." We may say with Saul of Tarsus, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do," or with Samuel, "Speak, Lord for thy servant heareth."

The Canticles, one of which is to be used after the second lesson, are The Song of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and the 100th Psalm. The subject of the former is that great redemption to which the whole New Testament relates. It traces back that redemption to the word, the promise, and oath of God, and so connects the New Testament with the Old, and both with the counsels of God from eternity. Zacharias was "full of the Holy Ghost" when he uttered this hymn of praise; and we cannot profitably join in it without a portion of the same spirit. The other Cantic, the 100th Psalm, celebrates

our new creation in Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. *It is He who hath made us his people and the sheep of his pasture.* We are not naturally such; and if by adoption and grace we are become *his people*, it is our bounden duty, *to enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; to be thankful unto him and speak good of his name.*

The Canticles or hymns after the first lesson in the *Evening* service, are the 98th and 92d Psalms. Both are most animated songs of praise for the blessings of our redemption by Christ, and for the revelation of that mercy made in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; for redemption by Christ is the grand subject of both Testaments. Nothing is necessary to enable us to enter into the meaning and spirit of these hymns but a lively sense of our lost estate, and of the greatness of that mercy which has provided for our salvation from the guilt, the power and punishment of our sins. If we feel these things, then shall we “sing with the heart and with the understanding also.”

The Canticles after the second lesson at *Evening* service are the 67th and 103d Psalms. In all these Canticles the minister and people have each their part to take, the clerk acting only as the leader of the congregation. Those persons who stand up in stupid silence, leaving the clerk to make the responses by himself, afford reason for suspicion that they do not enter into those feelings which these parts of the service express.

Having heard the doctrine of the scripture stated in the first and second lessons, we proceed to sum up our belief, as derived from the scriptures, in *The Apostle's Creed*, which the minister and people are to repeat

aloud together; as their joint confession of faith. It is short and plain that it may be soon learned, easily understood, unanimously agreed in, and frequently repeated, by all christian people. It contains no nice speculations, nor matters of doubtful disputation. Yet it contains a sufficient outline of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, the doctrine of the Trinity and the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It is a confession of faith “in God the Father, who made us and all the world, in God the Son who redeemed us and all mankind, and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth us and all the elect people of God.” That a public avowal of our faith is required of us, appears by St. Paul's declaration, that “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Such a confession would be our bounden duty, were it to be made at the risk of our property, our liberty, or our life. We owe it to God, to ourselves, and to the church. May our hearts always join in it, and our lives ever give proof of our sincerity in making it.

[To be continued.]

*It is a hard thing to be an Unbeliever.*  
Dr. Davies.

Before a man can work himself up to the disbelief of a religion, attended with such undeniable evidence, and inspiring such divine dispositions and exalted hopes, what absurdities must he embrace? What strong convictions must he resist! what dark suspicions, what boding fears and misgivings, what shocking peradventures, and tremendous doubts, must he struggle with! what glorious hopes must he resign! what gloomy and shocking prospects must he reconcile himself to!



what violence must be offered to conscience! what care must be used to shut all the avenues of serious thought, and harden the heart against the terrors of death, and the supreme tribunal! How painful a piece of preposterous self-denial, to reject the balm the gospel provides to heal a broken heart, and a bleeding conscience, and the various helps and advantages it furnishes us with, to obtain Divine favour and everlasting happiness! How hard to work up the mind to believe, that Jesus who spoke and acted, and suffered, and did every thing like an incarnate God, was an impostor, or at best a moral philosopher! Or that the religion of the bible, which contains the most sublime and godlike truths, and the most pure and perfect precepts of piety and morality, is the contrivance of artful and wicked men, or of evil spirits. These are no easy things. There are sceptics and smatterers in infidelity; but few, very few, are able to make thorough work of it, and commence staunch unbelievers. The attempt itself is a desperate shift. A man must have reduced himself to a very sad case indeed, before he can have any temptation to set about it. He has by his wilful wickedness, set christianity against him, before he can have any temptation to set himself against christianity; and when he proclaims war against it, he finds it hard, yea impossible, to make good his cause. He may indeed put on the airs of defiance and triumph, and affect to laugh at his enemy, and at times be half persuaded, that he has really got the victory. But such now find the arms of their own reason often against them, and *their own conscience forms violent resolutions in favour of religion, which they cannot entirely suppress; so that whatever they pretend, they believe,*

and tremble too. They find it hard even now to kick against the goads, and O! how much harder will they find it in the issue! Their resistance will prove ruinous to themselves; but neither they, nor the gates of hell, shall prevail against the cause they oppose. Christianity will live when they are dead and damned, according to its sentence. It is a long tried bulwark that has withstood all the assaults of earth and hell, for thousands of years, and has still proved impregnable. Infidels may hurt themselves by opposing it, as an unruly stupid ox, their proper emblem, may hurt himself, but not the goads by kicking against them.

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For the Repository.

The following extracts are taken from an excellent volume of "Letters addressed to a Young Lady," and a place is asked for them in the Repository, by

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WHEN the soul is really awakened by a sense of its weakness and backslidings, when it feels the reproofs of conscience, and the shame of contrition, it will naturally shrink from returning to those scenes, and to the indulgence of those feelings which it knows are dangerous to its peace. Convinced of her own weakness, afraid to trust her scarcely confirmed resolutions, the true penitent wishes alike to avoid the hazard of falling into new transgressions, and the contumely attending the past. She is deafer than the adder to the syren strains of adulation; she cannot derive amusement from crowds or bustle. She who has so weighty a task to perform, cannot afford to trifle away the important hours. Rational amusement, contentment, tranquillity and religious hope, will be sought by her.

Modern times are not destitute of examples to prove, that honour and

prosperity are alike unstable; nor can we preserve either our temporal or spiritual affairs from disorder, but by continual vigilance. The road from the heights of virtue to the depths of vice, does not lead you down a steep precipice, but a gradual slope. A slight indiscretion, which scarcely alarms the most scrupulous conscience, *if suffered to pass without observation*, prepares the mind for serious error; error delivers it over to crime; and crime, when often repeated, petrifies the moral feelings into insensible depravity.—The sensibilities of virtue should be cherished with as much care as the sensibilities of temper should be modified; and *unless we allow the soul time to whisper to us in retirement, we can never catch its still soft voice amid the busy turmoil of dissipation.*

Were the christian duty of self-examination rigorously performed, I am persuaded the world would exhibit a very different appearance, both with respect to sin, and its constant associate, sorrow. Enfeebled virtue would recover its stability; nay the seducer himself would pause in his guilty career, and perceive “consideration come like an angel to whip the offending Adam out of him,” and shew him the little value of what he seeks to purchase at the risk of eternal perdition. Nor are the uses of reflection and meditation confined to our moral conduct, though their exercise is here most important. It is by these means that the difficulties of science are conquered, and the refinements of taste acquired.—The skilful artist is formed by this self-communion, and the plans of the statesman and the warrior are thus ripened into perfection. Even that which is known by the name of pleasure, is more truly enjoyed by retrospection, in the silence of your own apartment, than when the gau-

dy scene actually passed your staring eyes, and the confused buzz of sound agitated your auricular organs. A load of undigested pleasure palls the satiated appetite; a small quantity, taken after proper intervals, exhilarates the spirits, and infuses alacrity into every part.—This is especially true of the pleasures which arise from conversation. Even genius and brilliant sense, solicit *minute* attention, and refuse to unveil their coy graces to the careless gaze of the hurried beholder.

Are those then true voluptuaries, who fly from pleasure to pleasure, eager to grasp all, and yet securing none? No, they are only another order of those *drudging* slaves of vanity, who would impose themselves upon us as free and happy beings.—Languid and spiritless, they set out upon their daily round, as a watchman does on his monotonous task. Ask the votary of pleasure, whether she liked her preceding evening, and her account will only add to Solomon’s mournful catalogue of deceitful vanities. The toiling mill-horse is not a greater slave, nor are his motions circumscribed by more arbitrary injunctions.

I should be a most merciless tyrant, if I supposed it possible for a lady, who lives in a continued bustle, and spends the greater part of her time either abroad, or in company at home, to “examine her ways,” or to “commune with her heart.” These scenes of continual hurry and confusion so exhaust the frame, and dissipate the spirits, that *the heart loses both its inclinations and its sympathies*, and the lady thus occupied, becomes a mere self-moved automaton, incapable of either tenderness, resentment or compassion. To a being who can neither be roused to virtue, nor *seduced* to vice, cautions are unnecessary; but many a heart



escapes the frigid cold of this arctic circle, and *repines with secret sorrow, or frets with fruitless wishes*, while the vacant eye seems only to ponder the fantastic scene, of which it is an unconscious witness. To a person thus situated, consideration becomes of most momentous importance; for *the wish should be analyzed, and the sorrow traced to its source*. Her desires too should be so scrutinized, as to discover, whether they are of that innocent kind which she may pray God to prosper; or *whether she should not cast them from her heart, as she would the deadly worm of Nile*.

Genuine virtue, when strengthened by christian principle, and supported by divine grace, can vanquish every temptation; but divine grace is only given to those who ask it, and christian principles cannot be the predominant rule of conduct among the "votaries of pleasure;" and surely, when we cannot boast such protection, the fragility of all human aids is too indisputable to render it safe, to be put upon any severe probation. Prudence may be pacified by precaution, pride can be soothed by flattery, reserve is often conquered by obsequiousness. When instead of regulating our conduct by the immutable laws of God, we regard only the opinion of the world, we have only to be assured, that no eye seeth, and virtue and vice lose their identity.

In judging of the folly of those who seek to form their children upon the model which vanity presents, we must add, to the great hazard of success, the brevity of the acquisition. Every year brings in a new fashion, and the business of education is never finished. There is even a fashion in our passions and sensations; we must either be immoderately happy, monstrously delight-

ed, intensely charmed, or amazingly interested. But as expressions of extreme suffering are best adapted to the joyless career of a fine lady, her taste of learning is chiefly bounded by the compound epithets of immensely dull, horribly fatiguing, and insufferably vapid.

If the quackery of education only extended to the formation of vain and frivolous beings, we should have far less reason to complain of its prevalence. Many strong minds would resist those shackles, and *disappointment would divert ill-directed understandings to some nobler pursuit*. But a system of morals is formed still more dangerous than this system of manners. And a morality which rejects the basis of religion, is admirably suited to people, who while they seem to make the opinions of others their standard of right and wrong, in affairs of vanity and fancy, really bow to no other idol than selfishness, and are secretly pursuing self-enjoyment. To banish from the mind the ideas of an Omniscient God, and a retributive hereafter, gives an amazing release to the appetites; but this emancipation will not satisfy these new organizers of the soul. *The passions must be made tyrants*, and for this end the most suitable means are provided. The habitual indulgence of violent desires, is by them called exerting the noblest energies; and discarding the restraints of religion is misnamed ingenuousness, and obedience to the honest dictates of nature. Those very systems which inculcate vice, profess the greatest regard for virtue.

Let it not be supposed, that I am inclined to treat the pretty butterfly of vanity with too much severity. If I could awake these triflers from their dangerous torpor, surely severity would be mercy. They are pro-

bably responsible for many misemployed talents, *at least they are sporting with that important trust, existence.* While they falsely conceive themselves sent into the world to display their accomplishments, life glides from them; the opportunity of improving lost time ceases; and at the bar of a just God, they will be questioned for sins of omission. It is not merely the evil they have committed, but the good which they ought to have done, that will form the terrible inquisition. A life of selfish ignorance is a life of guilt, self-indulgence is that scriptural unfruitfulness, whose punishment is so awfully predicted. The attainments to which they sacrificed their lives, will perish amidst the morbid vapours of the grave, and the naked spirit will appear divested of every graceful ornament, unless its piety, its alms-deeds, and its works of justice and mercy, and self-denial, qualify it to be arrayed in the robes of righteousness.

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*Of Pride—An Extract.*

PRIDE is a corruption that seems almost originally engrafted in our nature; it exerts itself in our first years, and without continual endeavours to suppress it, influences our last. It is the native of every country, infects every climate, and corrupts every nation. It mingles with all our vices, and without the most constant and anxious care, will mingle also with our virtues. One concomitant of pride is envy, or the desire of debasing others. A proud man is uneasy and dissatisfied, while any of those applauses are bestowed on another, which he is desirous of himself.

One motive to pride is knowledge. But how little reason have we to boast of our knowledge, when we

only gaze and wonder at the surfaces of things; when the wisest and most arrogant philosopher, knows not *how* a grain of corn is generated, or *why* a stone falls to the ground? But were our knowledge far greater than it is, let us yet remember, that goodness, not knowledge, is the happiness of man. *The day will come, it will come quickly, when it shall profit us more to subdue one proud thought than to have numbered the host of Heaven.*

There is another more dangerous species of pride; so watchful is the enemy of souls, and so deceitful are our own hearts, that often a victory over one sinful inclination, exposes us to be conquered by another. Spiritual pride represents a man to himself, beloved by his Creator in a particular degree, and of consequence, inclines him to think others not so high in his favour as himself. This kind of pride is generally accompanied with great uncharitableness, and severe censure of others, and may obstruct the great duty of repentance. But it may be hoped, that a sufficient remedy against this sin, may be found, by reminding those who are infected with it, that the blood of Christ was poured out upon the cross, to make their best endeavours acceptable to God. And that *they, whose sins require such an expiation, have little reason to boast of their virtue.*

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*Gisborne's Three Plain Directions to those who are anxious that the Holy Spirit should lead them to Eternal Life.*

1st. Seek for the grace of the Holy Spirit, by suitable prayer, in the name of Christ. *Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he shall give it you.* If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your



children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. "Ask and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Observe now, that these expressions describe earnest and persevering prayer. They do not, in any respect, accord with lukewarm, or short-lived supplications. They teach you, that if you would obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit, you must first become sensible how greatly you stand in need of it; for otherwise you will not pray for it with fervency, and how continually you stand in need of it; for otherwise you will not pray for it with constancy.

2nd. Strive always to act up to the measure of the grace which you have received. *To him that hath, to him who has faithfully endeavoured to live, according to the helps with which it has pleased God to furnish him, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him, who hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away.* Cherish then the good desires which rise in your mind; for it is by the Holy Spirit that they are planted there. Keep stedfast to the religious resolutions which you have formed, for it is the Holy Spirit who has inclined you to form them. Carry them promptly and heartily into execution, for it is by the Holy Ghost, that you are enabled, not only *to will* but *to do*. Study the scriptures regularly and devoutly; for the *holy men* of old who wrote them, wrote as *they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. Be diligent, be sincerely pious, in attendance on all the outward ordinances of religion; for through them the Holy Ghost dispenses his grace. Receive with a willing mind the instructions, public and private, of ministers of the gospel; for at the peril of their own

souls they are to feed and to watch over the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers.

Lastly. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by returning to sins, which you have forsaken; or by allowing yourself to proceed in any new course of iniquity. Knowingly to continue in any habit of transgression, is to forsake the Holy Ghost. It is not only to refuse to obey the influence of the good Spirit of God; it is to follow the guidance of the evil spirit, the adversary of God, the Devil. It is to provoke the Holy Ghost to depart from you; to cast you off, to abandon you to yourself, and to the dominion of the powers of darkness. Keep then your heart diligently, that neither wrath, nor envy, nor hatred, nor impurity, nor covetousness, nor deceit, nor discontent, nor pride, nor worldly anxiousness, nor any other unchristian disposition, may harbour there. Review from time to time your outward conduct, that you may discover, whether you are indulging any practice, unbecoming a servant of the Lord Jesus. Endeavour day by day, to grow in grace; to gain more and more the mastery, through the Holy Spirit, over your remaining corruption. Then will he preserve you under his care. He will advance you in spiritual understanding, in spiritual strength, in saving faith, in moral attainments. He will make you more and more meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, and will seal you unto the day of redemption.

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On Reading the Scriptures.—An Extract.

READ the scriptures as a book made by God himself. The word is of divine original, and reveals the deep things of God to us. When

you read the word, look on it as a soul-enriching treasury. In this word are scattered many divine aphorisms—gather them up as so many jewels. This blessed book helps to enrich you; it fills your head with knowledge, and your heart with grace; it stores you with promises. Read the word as a book of evidences. Would you know whether God be your God—search the scriptures. Look upon the word, as a spiritual magazine, out of which you fetch all your weapons to fight against sin and Satan. The word fenceth off temptation. Satan never sooner foils a christian, than when he is unarmed and without scripture weapons. Look upon the word as a spiritual glass to dress yourselves by. In other glasses you may see your faces; in this glass you may see your hearts. Look upon the word as a book of spiritual receipts. Basil compares the word to an apothecaries shop, which hath in it all kinds of medicines and antidotes.—If you find yourselves dead in duty, here is a receipt, “Thy word hath quickened me.” If you find your hearts hard, the word doth melt them, and therefore it is compared to fire. If you are poisoned with sin, here is an herb to expel it.

Look upon the word as a sovereign elixir to comfort you in distress. What are the promises, but divine cordials to revive fainting souls. Read the word as the last will and testament of Jesus Christ. Here are many legacies given to them that love Him—pardon of sin, adoption, consolation—with what seriousness doth a child read over the will and testament of his father, that he may see what is left him.—Read it as a book by which you must be judged. They who live according to the rules of this book, shall be acquitted, they who live contrary

to them, shall be condemned. There are two books God will go by, the book of conscience, and the book of scripture; the one shall be the witness, and the other the judge. With what care and devotion then should every christian read the book of God. This is that book, by which God will proceed at the last. *They who fly from the word as a guide, shall be forced to submit to it as a judge.*

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*Extracts.*

If you would be violent for Heaven, take heed of despondency of spirit. Be serious but cheerful. An uncheerful heart is unfit to pray or to praise God. Such as go drooping under fears and discouragements cannot be zealous in religion. When a soldier faints in the field he soon lets fall his sword. David chides himself out of his melancholy “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God.” A sad heart makes a dull action. Cheerfulness is like musick in battle; it excites a christian’s spirits, and makes him vigorous and lively in duty. What is done with cheerfulness, is done with delight, and the soul flies most swiftly to Heaven upon the wings of delight.

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A slothful christian is like a fearful soldier. Sloth is the soul’s sleep. Many instead of working out salvation, sleep away salvation. Such as will not labour, must be put at last to beg; they must beg as Dives for one drop of water. God never made Heaven an hive for drones.—Sloth is a disease apt to grow upon men; shake it off. A sluggish soul is a prey to Satan. While men are asleep in sloth, the Devil enters and devours them.